

THE HISTORY OF IT ALL...

Back in the late 1990's and early 2000's, *Recess* was...

- The highest rated show on ABC's One Saturday Morning, running for 127 episodes...
- An international hit in Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Japan, and around the world (In Spain they called it *La Banda Del Patio*, in France it was *La Cour De Recre!*)...
- A Disney Channel staple for many years...
- The source of spinoffs, including books, direct-to-videos, a feature film...

AND NOW WE ARE GOING TO REBOOT IT!!!

But we want to do more than simply come up with new stories for the same characters at the same old school – as if 20 years had passed and nothing had changed. We want to think of this new *Recess* in the same way Gene Rodenberry thought about *Star Trek* when he rebooted his 1960's classic into *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in the 1980's. We want both to embrace the original series, but also create something new for a contemporary audience!

And that new show is called *Recess: Next Bell!*

Recess: Next Bell is designed as a NEW SHOW for a NEW ERA! This show features a whole new group of kids – just as fun as TJ and his gang, but updated for today's audience. At the same time, characters from the original show are still around, too, but they're older now – about the age of our kids' parents. In fact, (spoiler alert) we are going to discover that some of them ARE the parents of the new gang.

SO...WHO'S THE AUDIENCE?

For years we've been hearing from our old fans, asking us when we're going to make a new *Recess*. We see them at Comic-Con dressed up as our characters. They send us links to live-action versions they've made of our original credit sequence, starring themselves cosplaying our characters. Some fans even made an unauthorized live action-movie!

By now, some of the older fans have even had kids of their own, and they watch the original *Recess* together – which we love because ultimately, *Recess* was always intended for kids. It's about kids, from a kid's point of view. In fact, we originally wrote the show to appeal to our own kids, who were 8 or 9 when it premiered – which is why *Recess* always felt personal to us. (Coincidentally, Joe had a late-in-life son who just turned 9...so it's personal to him once again!)

So, based on our own experience, we were sure there was an appetite for a new *Recess*. But we had no idea how big that appetite was until we tested the original show with various research groups – and everything we'd been hearing and thinking turned out to be true. All three audiences loved it!

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1. KIDS – who never saw the original show, but who would love a show about them and their world.

2. PARENTS – who are fans of the original show, and would get a kick out of watching a new version with their own kids.

3. ADULTS WITHOUT KID (AWOKS) – who are also fans of the original show and would love to see what’s happened to the old gang, how their lives have worked out (or not worked out), and who can relate to their new adventures.

We want to make a show for ALL THREE AUDIENCES -- the ultimate CO-VIEWING EXPERIENCE!

THEMES – THEN & NOW

The original *Recess* was the story of six brave fourth graders, all very different, who banded together to survive the crazy world of elementary school – navigating between big kids, savage kindergartners, mean girls, bullies, and an authoritarian administration. It was about sticking together no matter what, fighting *the man*, finding a rational balance between conformity and individuality, and getting through tough times with....A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS! And we know these time-tested themes are just as relevant in 2023.

In today’s world of Global Warming, Me Too, Black Lives Matter, and LGBT+ rights, modern kids are craving heroes who look like them, have the same issues, and are willing to take action. They need, and want, role models who stand up for their friends, figure out what’s right and wrong, and defend the little guy – getting into “good trouble,” in the words of John Lewis – to make the world a better place.

THIRD STREET SCHOOL – TODAY!

When *Recess: Next Bell* begins, we discover that a lot has changed. The old school building’s still there, but its roof is festooned with many generations of “high tech” satellite dishes, digital antennae, cable wires...and more run-down than ever. There’s a NEW WING – a gaudy addition, designed in faux-Frank Gehry style, called “The Principal Peter Prickly Memorial Multi-Purpose Room,” but it looks completely incongruous, just the kind of boondoggle that a school district would design.



Of course Miss Finster has long retired...but her old lackey Randall is still there. Although he is now...PRINCIPAL WEEMS!!!

But at the same time, school is still school, teachers are still teachers, and kids are still kids. Sure, there are cell phones now, and white boards rather than black boards, but the playground is still the center of kids' lives. And we are seeing the world from a KID'S POINT OF VIEW...which means it's fun, wild, and almost MAGICAL!



THE MAGICAL-REAL PLAYGROUND

Just like the original show, *Recess: Next Bell* will utilize the technique of “magical realism” to show the world *as kids see it* (an idea borrowed from the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in which things are sometimes exaggerated just a step past the possible, showing life not as it actually is, but as it *feels*). For example:

- * when a kid kicks a ball really hard, we'll cut to outer space where we see it leave the atmosphere, and knock an antenna off the international space station.
- * if a couple kids are trying to dig to Australia... they'll actually get there, popping out on the other side.
- * if you hear a story about a second grader getting taken away by aliens, that's probably what really happened.

Magical Realism takes full advantage of the animation medium to tell stories, and we use it not only to exaggerate events, but characters too. So at recess, you might meet kids like:

THE STEM KIDS – a reclusive group of kids who spend their days hacking into computer systems and building DIY mainframes, the STEM kids hang out in what appears to be an ordinary clay pipe in a remote section of the playground. Inside, their lair is impossibly large, with dangling wires, bare bulbs, kludged computers, and geeky kids clicking keyboards. Led by GIGABYTE, a tough girl in a wheelchair, these kids can crack any system. Want the answers to tomorrow's standardized test? Better grades? Captaincy of the Crossing Guard? Principal Weems' credit history? Look no further.

THE SAND KIDS – these guys have spent so much time digging in the sand, they've actually learned to live underneath it. When you climb into what looks like an empty sandbox, they emerge, half human and half mole, yelling “HEY! SAND KIDS ONLY!” Rumor has it they've burrowed an entire underground city down there. If you need to tunnel underneath the principal's office, these kids can get it done before the bell rings.

THE MADISONS –Like their mean girl predecessors, the Ashleys, but now including boys and non-binary kids as well. They still torment the playground with snarky judgment and rumor mongering, but now they have new weapons: Twitter, SnapChat and Tiktok!

THE GREAT WISE WILLY – Keeper of Ancient Third Street Lore, who looks like a kid but somehow has a long gray beard and flowing robes. Woe be to him who fails to heed the ancient texts...

THE DODGE-BALLERS – a clique of popular jocks ruled by the Duke of Dodg-eball, the biggest and strongest among them all, the Dodge Ballers are obsessed with team sports – especially those involving hurling balls at second graders. Cross into their territory, intentionally or not, and the Dodge Ballers will line you up against a wall and take penalty kicks at you... execution style.

And of course.. **THE KINDERGARTNERS**. They used to be paste-eating savages, but now they've evolved into *Mad Maxx*-style mohawked barbarians. They charge like a wild horde, speeding through the playground on monster big wheels, fire spewing out of screeching electric guitars, destroying everything in their wake! They still eat paste, though.

In the middle of it all is our main gang of fourth-grade friends....

THE NEW GANG



...reflecting what modern kids are going through today. More diverse, more in tune with the internet age, but still in many ways like our old gang – tough, loyal, willing to stand up for the little guy and take on “the man” – but mostly out to HAVE FUN....

They are....



RUBY – THE FEARLESS LEADER: The daughter of Spinelli and Vince from the old *Recess* gang, Ruby is a super confident, bi-racial kid. As leader of the new *Recess* gang, Ruby gets her strength and toughness from her mom, and her sense of style and cool from her dad. Like Princess Leia, or Tatum O’Neill in *Bad News Bears*, Ruby may look cute but she’s tough as nails, with tons of energy and chutzpah, always willing to take on “The Man.” When she wants something, she goes for it – consequences be damned. Upbeat and self-assured, Ruby is straight-talking, fearless, and super loyal. She’s always there for her pals and she doesn’t suffer fools gladly.

Like Tom Sawyer (or TJ Detweiler), Ruby is a hero who likes to have FUN. Other kids might say they’re bored, but never Ruby – even if it means trying things everyone else thinks are crazy – like putting ice cream on a chili dog. But mostly she loves FREEDOM! Ruby does NOT like to be tied down or controlled by others. She hates it when teachers or bigger kids think they can tell her what to do – especially when it doesn’t make any sense! “Why should the teachers get to decide who has to stay after school? Isn’t this a democracy?!” And she also hates seeing other kids being corralled by those who are more powerful. “Those poor first graders, having to spend their whole recess cleaning up that wall. They didn’t mess it up!” “True – WE did!” “Which is ANOTHER reason we have to help ‘em!”

A kid who loves her friends more than anything, Ruby is a loyalist who’ll make a rousing speech to gather the troops, or rush headlong into danger if it means saving a pal. She can be brassy and bossy (like her mom), then moments later flash a winning smile to win over a crowd (like her dad).

But Ruby has one heroic flaw. Although she’s clear minded and sure of herself, especially when she gets morally outraged, Ruby is not a subtle problem-solver. She has a tendency to charge like a bull at obstacles in her way – a strategy that sometimes works, but often doesn’t. And when the chips are down, Ruby needs the help of someone who understands the sneaky ways of the world, how to be a sidwinder rather than a bull in a china shop. Fortunately, she knows just the guy: her best bud since kindergarten... Montijo.



MONTIJO – THE CLASS CLOWN: A funny, boy’s boy, Latino Kid – the Sundance to Ruby’s Butch, the Grace to her Will. A smooth talker and practical joker, Montijo is always looking for the sideways solution to a tricky problem, which makes him the perfect balance to Ruby’s direct action.

Ruby and Montijo have been best friends since kindergarten. From the moment their teacher put them down for a nap – and they both snuck off to the toy box – each recognized a kindred spirit. Both hungered for fun and adventure, both hated being controlled, and both LOVED their freedom (in Ruby’s case it’s an obsession, with Montijo it’s a preference.)

In many ways Ruby and Montijo are flip sides of the same coin. Both love to test boundaries, but they go about it in different ways. Ruby tends to storm the barricades, while Montijo employs charm. For example, when Ruby confronts the Supreme Leader Girl, demanding that the fifth graders let the first graders climb the jungle gym, the Leader is offended. Montijo quickly jumps in: “I think what Ruby’s trying to say, oh Supreme Leader Girl, is that she’d really appreciate your magnanimous permission. And may I also say, those new sneakers are quite fetching!”

Although Montijo’s always up for a new adventure, he doesn’t want to be foolhardy about it. He prefers to avoid jumping into the fray if he doesn’t see an upside. But Ruby can’t help it – especially if someone else is in need. When she proposes one of her reckless crusades, Montijo will often try to talk her out of it, but he’s so clever he can’t help but propose a cunning scheme to achieve it. Often, Montijo finds himself in the middle of one of Ruby’s missions despite his misgivings.

Montijo’s secret weapon is his innate intuition – he just “gets” how other people think. Like when the gang run across the principal’s secret cookie stash, Ruby’s about to swipe the big one on top when Montijo holds her back. “Wait a minute, Rubes. Skim some off the side of the pile. That way, he’ll never know they’re missing. We could keep it going for years!”

Third Street School’s most charming scoundrel, Montijo often uses his fast-talking skills to save the gang in the end, and Ruby knows Montijo will always be by her side when the battle turns ugly – even if his mouth is full of stolen cookies during the fight.



PARNELLI – THE DAREDEVIL: A fearless dude with a dream of jumping Third Street School with a rocket powered bike and a plywood ramp – all for the adulation of his YouTube fans – Parnelli is the embodiment of American can-do spirit. With his blissful, open smile, and his easy-going, slow-talking drawl, Parnelli seems like a daredevil Matthew McConaughey type who nothing fazes, even though he usually has a limb or two in a cast from one of his crazy stunts. Fearing neither pain nor death, Parnelli is the guy the gang always turns to when they need someone to smash through a brick wall.

The kind of guy who rushes in where wise men fear to tread, Parnelli is very popular on the playground. He's got that never-say-die enthusiasm that's both infectious and energizing, although once in a while it gets out of hand. Like the time Parnelli does a particularly crazy stunt, which somebody videos and puts on line, making him into a YouTube celebrity. The worldwide fame starts to go to Parnelli's head, and kids all over the school turn against him. But the gang stick by his side, and in the end Parnelli realizes that what matters most isn't attention or fame...it's friendship.

While some kids think Parnelli's a fool, the gang know there's more to him. Often he's the kid who articulates the deeper themes of an episode, or accidentally hits on them; the one who makes the big patriotic speech that spurs others on – even if (like John Belushi in Animal House or Reverend Jim in Taxi) they may ignore him. Until Ruby says “You know, what? I think Parnelli's got a point!” To which the daredevil responds, “I do?”



SIMONE – THE MASTER OF DISGUISE: 3rd Street School’s Drama Queen – always making big over-the-top emotional proclamations – is also their Queen of Drama – a kid who is seriously into theater. A Chinese-American girl who was adopted by a couple of Jewish Broadway fans, Simone has been into acting and costumes since she was a toddler. As a result, she’s also become an expert in stage make-up and disguises – a skill which comes in handy when the gang need to sneak past Principal Weems.

Whenever Ruby and Montijo need to create a diversion, they turn to Simone. She can make Parnelli look like she fractured her clavicle – complete with fake blood. When Montijo needs an excuse for his latest absence, she can deliver his ancient grandmother to the office (OR at least Montijo in an old dress and a white wig, with almost-believable age lines Sharpie’d onto his face!)

But Simone’s love affair with the theatrical expresses itself in other ways too. She can be extremely melodramatic. Ruby is annoyed when she gets banned from recess for standing up to Weems, but Simone takes the issue to a new level, “Don’t you see?! It’s not just Ruby – the very NATURE of recess is at stake! We must fight – FIGHT, I say – to redress this grievous wrong!” “Or,” suggests Montijo in an attempt to bring Simone back to earth, “Ruby could just show up on the playground... disguised as a boy.” “Oooh, interesting idea...” says Simone, transforming from drama queen to makeup artist. “You know, with the right wig and prosthetics, I think we could just about pull it off! Wait here, I’ll get my makeup case.”

But sometimes Simone takes her theater fandom a little too far, like the time she showed up on the playground dressed as Rum Tum Tugger from *Cats*, “because when one is in the theater, one dresses how one feels.” Still, the guys love how dramatic Simone can be. She gives them hope that if you believe in a thing, you can make it happen, that determination leads to victory, that the good guys really will win... As long as Principal Weems doesn’t figure out that the old teacher who just marched into his office and quit, is actually a fourth-grade drama queen in disguise.



EVERETT – THE BRAINS: A quiet African-American kid who dresses for utility, and seems to know a little about everything when it comes to science, engineering, and gadgetry, Everett is great at designing high tech tools to help execute Ruby's plans. Although he's the quietest member of the gang, dresses a bit oddly, and doesn't smile much (since he's on the Autistic spectrum), Ruby and the gang know that he's an essential member of the team. Usually listening quietly as they debate a problem, Everett will often chime in with the perfect solution to every problem – right when things seem at their direst.

Need a catapult to launch Ruby into Miss Finster's third-floor office, or a steam-powered bike to propel Parnelli over the school's main building? Everett can design one. In fact, that's what he's just been sketching in his little notebook. When Ruby asks, "Why didn't you tell us about this earlier?" Everett just shrugs, "You didn't ask me."

With the help of the computer skills of the Stem Kids, or the engineering know-how of the Makers, Everett can also supervise construction, often turning discarded gadgets and outdated electronics into the perfect tool – like the time he modified an old Viewmaster into a Virtual Reality headset. James Bond has Q, but Ruby and the gang have Everett.

But Everett brings more to the gang than just being their high-tech handyman. Even though he has a difficult time expressing himself, Everett understands emotions deeply. He often comprehends the members of the gang when no one else does, expressing in a terse clipped sentence why Montijo fears going on a particular mission, or just how Simone feels when she gets a case of stage fright. In many ways he's the soul of the group, although not always an expressive one.

At the end of a big mission, Montijo often turns to Everett with a smile, "If it weren't for you, we never would have gotten Ruby out of that." "I will always help you guys," replies Everett with a flat expression, "you're my best friends." "Thanks, man!" says Montijo, putting his hand on Everett's shoulder. "But please take your hand away. I don't like to be touched."

THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW SERIES

To introduce our new kid audience to the *Recess* universe, we start out with a story that seems at first like an episode from the old show...only set today. But as the story progresses, we reveal that it is much more...

THE PILOT

It's 2023. Third Street School is still there, although there have been a few changes – but it's grungy as ever. We meet Ruby and the new gang, and when Principal Weems confiscates a kids' toy, they vow to get it back.

But while sneaking into Weems' office, the gang discover he's in cahoots with a corporation that builds prisons, scheming to turn 3rd Street school into a privatized "Learn-iteniary!" In order to stop Weems' plan, the kids seek out the legendary TJ Detweiler for help... only to find out that TJ's become a lazy, rich drop out.

TJ doesn't believe the gang's story, and refuses to get involved, so the kids come up with an elaborate scheme to get TJ back to the school. There, our hero is shocked to see his old nemesis Randall is the principal. He starts to suspect maybe Ruby and the gang are onto something.



To prove they're right, the kids sneak TJ into Weems' office, where TJ is horrified to discover proof of the evil principal's intentions. Managing to escape just moments before being discovered, TJ and the gang high-tail it to Ruby's backyard. Although he now understands what's at stake, TJ remains convinced there's nothing he can do – after all, he's not the wily kid he used to be. Besides, back then he had his gang to help – and he has no idea where those guys are now. Just then Ruby's mom and dad come outside, "Ruby, what's going on out here?" TJ gasps. "SPINELLI? VINCE?" They're TJ's old best friends, now grown up. When a confused Spinelli demands an explanation, our kid hero smiles and says: "Mom, Dad, you're not going to believe it... but we're gonna get your old gang back together..."

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And so begins our new series...a story for all three audiences: KIDS, PARENTS, and AWOKS. As the series progresses we will slowly reveal what happened to the original characters, surprising our old fans, and subverting their expectations, as we reveal who our old gang have grown up to be.



THE OLD GANG – ALL GROWN UP



T.J. – Fans of the original show may be surprised to learn that our righteous leader TJ – who was an idealistic rebel when he was 9 – has turned into a disillusioned, selfish adult, who only cares about money and self-gratification. But TJ’s journey mirrors many of our adult fans’ real lives and experiences, and TJ will regain his idealism over the course of the series.

The past 20 years have been a bumpy road for TJ. He went to college, but got in trouble right away (Good Trouble of course), and dropped out after his first year. After that, he took a motorcycle trip across the country, looking for adventure and meaning. He even fell in love with Spinelli at one point – though sadly for him, the feeling wasn’t mutual. By the end of his trip, TJ felt like life had no purpose... until he and a tech buddy came up with an idea for a new kind of hand-held video machine, TJ called the “*Whomp-It!*” Using his natural charm, TJ managed to talk some high-tech investors into funding his idea, which to TJ’s surprise became an instant hit. TJ was an overnight millionaire, but success only made him feel more empty. To everyone’s shock, TJ disappeared. Ever since, TJ’s been hiding out in a high-tech mansion on the edge of town, reclusively living like a 9-year-old... until one day he gets an unexpected visit from some kid named Ruby.



SPINELLI – Known as the tough and rebellious kid, Spinelli also had a talent for drawing. Which is why, after graduating high school, she got a scholarship to an art institute. But art school wasn’t a good fit. Spinelli chaffed at less talented teachers telling her what to do, and cringed at the self-promotional art gallery scene. She did, however, meet a bunch of cool lesbians who were forming a neo-punk band called NGRI GRLZ. So Spinelli quit art school and became Ngri Grlz’ lead singer, which is how she found herself on stage at Coachella one night, screaming her lungs out to a giant crowd of sweaty youth. It was there she noticed TJ in the audience, smiling proudly up at her. TJ was on his journey of self discovery, and the two of them hung out on tour for a couple weeks, until TJ got too serious. Because she was on her own journey of self-discovery, Spinelli wasn’t into guys at that point. She tried to let TJ down easy, but he didn’t take it well, riding off in anger on his Harley. But their reunion rekindled something in Spinelli: the desire to fight the good fight, to make

the world a better place. Spinelli dropped out of the band and applied to the police academy. While there, Spinelli ran into Vince, just back from playing pro basketball in Italy. Vince wondered if maybe Spinelli was selling herself short, and she wondered if maybe he was right. Even before finishing at the academy, Spinelli applied to law school...and got in! It was while she was in law school that she and Vince really fell in love. They got pregnant. Got married. And got Ruby – the love of their lives. Now Spinelli has an even more important reason to fight to make the world a better place – a reason that wakes up every morning and wants her breakfast.





VINCE – The most charming and athletic of the group, Vince was also one of the smartest – the only person in class who got better grades was Gretchen. Still, sports remained Vince’s first love, so when his college team won their division with Vince as lead scorer, he was sure he’d get picked for the pros. Unfortunately, he just wasn’t tall enough for the NBA, so Vince went to Italy to play there for a few seasons. Playing pro ball in Italy was fun, but ultimately Vince realized it wasn’t fulfilling. So he came home and got a job coaching local teams around town. And that’s when he ran into Spinelli, who was playing a bit of basketball herself on the police academy team. As they slowly fell in love, Vince and Spinelli began to effect changes in each other. Vince helped Spinelli calm and focus herself, and gave her the confidence to find something she never thought she had in her: a passion for the law. At the same time, Spinelli convinced Vince to marry his charm, intelligence and love of sports, to become a TV sportscaster. But the biggest role Vince was to play with Spinelli was to be a parent. Getting married and starting a family has been the joy of Vince’s life, and he and his daughter Ruby have a great father-daughter relationship. In fact, it’s his daughter Ruby who first proposes the idea that Vince should aim for something even bigger: to run for mayor! (But that’s a story for another time.)

GRETCHEN – Everyone knew that brilliant-but-clumsy Gretchen Grundler would grow up to be some sort of super genius scientist, but no one guessed she’d become a gorgeous, statuesque, super-model of a super genius scientist. (Well, no one but Spinelli that is...but we’ll get to their story later.) When he tracks Gretchen down in her secret lab outside of Livermore, TJ’s eyes almost fall out of his head (think Jessica Chastain in *The Martian*.) “TJ!” she smiles, stepping forward to greet him, then trips over her feet, knocking over a row of test tubes. (She’s still as clumsy as ever.) It turns out Gretchen’s had a very successful career, first topping her class at Stanford, then working on the Mars probe for NASA, redesigning the ISS, and finally heading development for an Elon Musk-type character, with whom she had a big falling out when she invented a car that runs on something even better than electricity: dirt! But when it comes to saving 3rd Street School, the dirt power can wait.

MIKEY – Poetic, plus-sized Mikey became the big celebrity of the gang (although surprisingly, it takes the others a long time to track him down.) After high school, Mikey pursued his musical career, attending Juilliard, where he was discovered by a famous soprano, who introduced him to the Met. By the time he was 25, Mikey had become a world-renowned baritone, and blew the world away when he sang at the Taj Mahal with the Three Tenors on an album called “3 Plus 1.” While in India though, Mikey found a deeper calling – his inner spirituality. He dropped out of the celebrity rat-race, joined an ashram, and became a highly respected guru named “Yogi Mike.” After that, Mikey fell off the radar. Even *TMZ-Classical Edition* couldn’t find him. Sadly, when the guys finally do track down their old friend, they discover that Mikey caught a mysterious illness a couple of years back, and died amidst his adoring followers. But among Mikey’s possessions, the gang are surprised to find a box with their names on it. Inside is a book of Mikey’s sayings – apparently, Mikey always knew his friends would get back together and

come searching for him. Later, whenever they need inspiration, the gang will find it in his surprisingly visionary book.

GUS – Small but brave, Gus Griswold’s life journey is the most surprising of all – although it didn’t start out that way. After college, Gus followed in his father’s footsteps, joining the army, and quickly moved up the ranks, promoted for his brains, loyalty, and courage. By the time Gus was 25, he had become the youngest Lieutenant Colonel in the modern army. But he knew something wasn’t right, that he wasn’t being true to his inner self. So Gus made a change. A big change. A change that blew the lid off the military. After transitioning, the person once known as Gus had become her true self: Lieutenant-Colonel Nikki Griswold. At first there was a movement to drum Nikki out of the army, but when *Time* and *Newsweek* both put her on their covers, Lieutenant Colonel Nikki Griswold became the face of the new army. But the challenges weren’t over yet. First Nikki had to face her own truth, then the army had to come around, but now Nikki has to face her family and friends – and that might prove to be the biggest battle this soldier has yet to fight.

AND we will be running into a lot of OTHER ORIGINAL CHARACTERS TOO! We’ll find out what happened to the grown up Ashleys, King Bob...even Miss Finster. But ultimately, this show isn’t just for adults fans – it’s main audience is KIDS!

So...how do we tell stories that appeals to both? Well, we have an idea...

A NEW KIND OF KID’S SHOW

A lot has changed since the original *Recess* was made back in the 90’s. Back then, both kids and adult shows wrapped up neatly at the end of every episode. But thanks to streaming, adult audiences like to binge serialized stories, with long plots that play out over a season – or even the entire series.

And kids are binging too, watching serialized shows like *Stranger Things*. But we know (both from personal experience, and from what we heard in research testing) that while they enjoy evolving, season-long plots, kids simultaneously yearn for simpler stories in which every individual episode has a clear theme and an explicit beginning, middle, and end.

So we want to do something new: a hybrid series, with the best of both worlds: simple stories that begin and end in each episode – AND simultaneously more complicated, overarching serialized plots that play out through a season, or even the entire series.

EPISODIC A-STORY/SERIALIZED B-STORY

Every episode of *Recess: Next Bell* will have an “A” Story and a “B” story. The “A” Story will be about what’s going on with the kids at school: new kids, crazy daredevil stunts to get attention, contending with mean teachers, sneaking pets into school – along with newer issues like Cyber bullying and Tik Tok obsessions. And sometimes these stories will bring in the adults

as well. But these “A” Stories will wrap up at the end of every episode, as they did in the original series.

For example, one story we want to tell is about how Ruby finds herself getting a crush...on a girl! So she talks to her mom about it, and Spinelli reveals that she’s been in love with women herself. So we find out that Spinelli is bi, and we learn that same-sex attraction is perfectly natural.

In another story, the gang realize that Gigabyte (who’s in a wheelchair) has never been to the top of Old Rusty, and they think it’s no fair. So they challenge the authorities, stage a protest; and, when none of that works, get the whole playground involved to build a giant ramp to the top – Parnelli’s the ramp expert, Everett engineers it. When they finally reveal it to Gigabyte she’s so touched she almost cries...but then reveals that she’s come up with her own way to get up there – a rocket pack on her wheelchair which flies her to the top!

At the same time, there will be an ongoing serialized “B” Story that will advance the overall arc of the series. TJ, Vince and Spinelli will find the rest of the old gang, and working with the new kids, will fight to stop Principal Weems from destroying 3rd Street School. At the beginning of the season Spinelli, Vince, and TJ fight “the man” through official channels, using the school board, the mayor, etc – but Randall is too sneaky for them. At times, they want to give up, but Ruby and the new gang never let their parents off the hook – just because they’re adults now doesn’t mean they can forget their idealistic roots. By the end of the first season, TJ and the old gang will defeat Randall, and get him removed as principal. But this presents a new problem: with Randall gone, who will now run Third Street school? Reluctantly, TJ and the gang realize it’s up to them. Now *they* must become “the man.”

CONCLUSION

By making our reboot a hybrid show, we believe it will not only speak to all three audiences, but will expand the *Recess* universe in an exciting new way. Episodes will still focus on kids struggling to navigate the complex world of elementary school, but in the background there’ll be another struggle going on too – one with even higher stakes, involving not only our new gang, but also the adults who care about them. In this way, our old gang and our new kids become the community that they want and need to be to meet the challenges of their world...bringing the two generations together to fight the good fight and stand up for the little guy in a NEW *RECESS*, *Recess: Next Bell* ... still about getting “a little help from your friends,” but the twist is: some of those friends are actually your parents!